

# Support processing and organisation skills

A suggestion for implementing the strategy  
'Helpful classroom strategies years 9–13' from  
the Guide: [Down syndrome and learning](#)

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## **Includes:**

- Support concentration and memory
- Offer visual timers
- Support planning and organisation
- Model planning and thinking
- Support thinking and pattern recognition
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Down syndrome and learning](#)

Strategy: [Helpful classroom strategies years 9–13](#)

Suggestion: [Support processing and organisation skills](#)

Date

14 September 2025

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/down-syndrome-and-learning/support-processing-and-organisation-skills-2](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/down-syndrome-and-learning/support-processing-and-organisation-skills-2)

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## Support concentration and memory

Provide options to support concentration and short-term memory.

- ✓ Monitor and moderate the classroom for visual and auditory distractions.
- ✓ Present information in a range of ways over an extended period of time (for example, a week) to help students retain information, build up their understanding and familiarity of the topic, and stay stimulated and focused.
- ✓ Discuss with students the effectiveness of the learning environment and remove barriers and make modifications where needed.
- ✓ In online environments, make effective use of visual prompts and cues to support understanding and navigation. Make useful hyperlinks to background knowledge or previous learning to increase connections.
- ✓ Schedule regular short breaks to allow students to move physically.

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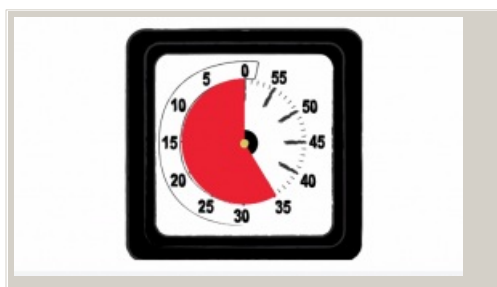
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## Offer visual timers

Visual timers, can help students "see" the time they have for a task.

This can reduce stress and increase motivation.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/27596627>

No captions or transcript

Source:

[Time Timer \(US\)](#)

<http://vimeo.com/27596627>

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## Support planning and organisation

Use flexible learning environments that support executive functioning skills such as processing information and organisation.

- ✓ Use charts, visual calendars, colour coded schedules, visible timers and cues to increase the predictability of regular activities and transitions.
- ✓ Encourage students to use their mobile devices to schedule alerts and reminders for regular and novel events and task deadlines.
- ✓ Model and make available graphic organisers and flow charts to support planning and thinking in all curriculum areas.
- ✓ Break tasks and lengthy assignments into small, manageable parts. Schedule workflow using [Trello](#) to organise what needs to be done and when.
- ✓ Provide options so that students can submit work online.

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## Model planning and thinking



Source:

Laurie Sullivan

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32561453@N05/8711384625/in/photolist-egN89D-egTTVS-egN86c-egN8kp-egTTA1-egN8tv-egN8ja-egTTPG-egTTXN-egN88e-egTTUC-egN8eX-egTTyj-egTTHQ-egN8di>

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## Support thinking and pattern recognition

Use tools and approaches to help learners to recognise patterns, critical features, big ideas and relationships.

- ✓ Use visuals — graphics, photos, cartoons, pictures — to support text and talk when explaining anything.
- ✓ Offer 3D virtual and physical models and real objects to help ākonga identify critical features.
- ✓ Use mind maps, flowcharts, and outlines to help learners unpack big ideas and relationships.
- ✓ Give ākonga multiple opportunities to engage with new ideas and concepts.
- ✓ Provide extra time for ākonga to think and process before they need to respond in a discussion.
- ✓ Use mindmaps to brainstorm ideas.
- ✓ Support group and class discussions with visual annotations to prompt later recall of key ideas.
- ✓ Make thinking tools and approaches available across all curriculum areas.

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## Useful resources





## UDL Curriculum toolkit: Building Flexible, Customizable Learning Environments

This resource was developed to facilitate the creation of flexible UDL instructional materials. The Toolkit software enables any curriculum developer or researcher to design web-based curricula or interventions — from scratch, as well as to retrofit existing curricula into a UDL-supported, scaffolded learning environment for middle and high school students.

Publisher: CAST (2024)

[Visit website](#)



## Time Timer (visual timer for visual people!)

For many students being able to see a visual representation of time passing can really support their time management. This video explains how time timer works.

Publisher: Time Timer

[Visit website](#)



## Ways to support teens with executive function

This video outlines some basic strategies for supporting teens with executive function skills during their secondary school years.

Publisher: Edutopia

[Visit website](#)

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